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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, June 15, 1934.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Cheese and Vegetable Menus for Summer." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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Serving hearty rich meals on a hot day always seems to me like wearing flannel underwear and an overcoat at the equator. Heavy meals, especially those containing a good deal of fat, don't go with hot weather anymore than heavy clothes. When the temperature climbs up and up, then is the time for your gauzy dresses and for menus that stress the appetizing light foods -- milk and milk combinations, fresh vegetables, attractive fresh salads, fresh vegetables, light meats, eggs and cheese dishes. Rich puddings, fried foods, hot breads and fat meats -- these are all very well in December, but they're not suitable fare for a warm summer day.

Many people like to go easy on the fatter kinds of meat in summer, and feature more of the lighter meats and of the egg and cheese dishes. Every now and then a good looking dinner plate combining garden vegetables and cheese is a fine choice for summertime. Now, cheese is an economical food, provided you don't go in for the fancy or expensive imported cheese, provided you select homemade cottage cheese or our good American cheddar cheese, which is made from whole milk and is one of the best food bargains. This plain American cheese is rich in protein and contains some fat. That puts it in the class of main-dish foods along with meat and fish and eggs. A cheese dish fits very nicely into a meatless menu. Cheese is also valuable for its calcium and phosphorus -- both useful minerals for our diets. Also cheddar cheese is a good source of vitamin A. Finally, it has special flavor. And flavor probably accounts for the popularity of cheese and makes it fit in so many different places in the meal.

I'm glad to notice that people are getting over that absurd notion that cheese is an indigestible food. Too bad that such a useful food should suffer from a false accusation. The foods specialists declare that cheese is not indigestible at all, if you prepare and eat it properly. The prejudice against it comes from wrong use. Cheese is a concentrated food, so it deserves the place of importance as one of the more nourishing items on the menu. It isn't a light frilly food, a relish or an appetizer. So it doesn't belong at the end of a meal of rich hearty dishes.

A big piece of cheese with a big piece of pie to top off a big meal -- well, you have to be a pretty hardy soul to stand the load. But cheese in its place is good food for almost anybody. The specialists nowadays even recommend cottage cheese and mild American cheese for young children.

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One more point: Don't eat a chunk of cheese/by itself. Eat it with crackers or on a sandwich. This helps you masticate it well and divide it into particles. Then it won't lie like a lump of lard in your stomach.

So much for eating cheese. Now about cooking it. The way you treat cheese on the stove has much to do with its digestibility. Like other protein foods, it toughens if you cook it too long or at too high a temperature. You can easily overcook cheese. Remember that it needs low heat and very little cooking. Too much cooking makes it stringy and tough. The fat melts out and leaves the solid curd for you to handle.

Most cheese dishes are better if you grate or shave or flake the cheese before mixing and cooking. You can put soft cheese through a potato ricer or a meat grinder. When cheese is broken up in some such way as this, it will spread more evenly among the other ingredients, melt more quickly, and require less cooking than when left in a big lump.

So the two important points to remember about cheese are: First, eat it properly -- give it the place of importance that you do any similar hearty food at a meal; then, if you cook it, use a very moderate temperature for a very short time. And, whenever possible, break it up and distribute it among less concentrated foods.

Just to illustrate how nicely cheese fits in warm-weather meals, I have here, all planned for you, four cheese-and-vegetable dinners. They're suitable for hot days during June, July, August and September.

Menu No. 1 begins with a chilled mixed fruit appetizer -- at least, that's the way we planned it. But if you prefer, you can shift that cold fruit mixture to the end of the meal and use it for dessert. Well, then -- Chilled, mixed-fruit appetizer; Cheese fondue on toast, and crisp bacon curls; Garden asparagus, buttered; Lettuce and endive salad with French dressing.

Menu No. 2 features cheese and rice patties served piping hot with tart red jelly, preferably currant jelly. Then creamed spinach; Tiny heated rolls; and, for dessert, Fresh berry tarts. Don't you like that menu? Let me go over it again. It's very inexpensive. Cheese and rice patties with tart jelly; Creamed spinach; Tiny heated rolls; Fresh berry tarts.

Menu No. 3 is a bit more elaborate -- nice for guests. Cheese souffle, served just from the oven, all hot and fluffy; Buttered green peas; Broiled tomatoes or tomato jelly; Corn sticks; Pineapple or fruit salad, or a bowl of fresh fruit for dessert.

Our last menu is a cool meal for a hot night. The first course is simply a combination salad -- balls of cottage cheese surrounded with fresh garden vegetables on lettuce. Crisp crackers go with this salad plate. For dessert, how about individual baked custards, chilled and served with fruit sauce -- perhaps strawberry preserve. Iced coffee or tea.

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